

WILLIAM A. LITTLE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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SETH SCOTT
FATHER OF TYREE SCOTT
OWNER, SCOTT'S ELECTRIC

INTERVIEWEE: SETH SCOTT

INTERVIEWERS: WILLIAM LITTLE

SUBJECTS: TYREE SCOTT; RACIST VIOLENCE; DISCRIMINATION; UNIONS; MILITARY SERVICE; RADICALIZATION

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[00:00:00] **SETH:** ...about Christmas, and I would always write and ask him what he wanted for Christmas. We would rarely write one another. And he would tell me what he wanted sometimes, and he sat down, and he wrote this letter, and he told me what he needed and he wanted, and then at the end of this letter, he said to me, "Daddy, if you can't afford it don't let it bother you, I'll figure something out." This was the thing that impressed me so much, because he was nothing but a kid. I don't think he was over eight years old. And I kept that in mind, this is something that you don't help kids to say, not very often, and yet I realized that he wasn't in no suffering position, but he never was very selfish. This is his problem today: he's always looking out for the other fellow more than he does himself. [laughs] One of the things that makes him so happy-go-lucky, as long as his family is eating, he really seems [inaudible]. Money doesn't mean anything to him. And I'll tell you, you know that.

[00:01:20] **WILLIAM:** Yes.

[00:01:20] **SETH:** And one of the other things that might help something: when he first got out of the Marine Corps and came here, and we were discussing my father. And he asked me some of the things about how did my father do what he did, in the amount of years that he did. I told him that it was a lot of hard work and sacrifice. Even at that, I never realized that things go so deeply with people, but my father was killed before I was born. That's one of the things that he always talked about. As a matter of fact I'll show you my father's picture. He never saw me, I never saw him. And this impressed Tyree very much, because he was a hard worker and did an awful lot of sacrificing for his family, and always tried to, he always tried to—he wanted the best for his family, which I think is a good idea, and I think that my son was impressed by that. But then after my father got killed, this started him thinking other ways. I'll show you his picture.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

...came up here. He already came up. Tyree came out here.

[00:02:45] **WILLIAM:** Oh, that's right, that's right.

[00:02:46] **SETH:** My father was dead, he died five months before all these things.

[00:02:49] **WILLIAM:** He mentioned that he came out here one summer, one year.

[00:02:51] **SETH:** Yeah, he did. He was eleven years old. He stayed and went to school, but then when the time comes for him to go home, I didn't want him to go, and he hung around two or three days. He didn't say nothing, then finally, one day he came up and said, "Dad, I want to go home." I didn't want him to go, but I knew that if he goes I probably won't get him back. And sure enough, I didn't see him anymore. That was in 1951, I didn't see him anymore until '57. Then from '57 I didn't see him anymore until '64.

[00:03:48] **WILLIAM:** 1964, he went into the Marine Corps in 1957?

[00:03:52] **SETH:** He went in in 1957, and he got out in '66, I think it was. Nine years.

[00:04:03] **WILLIAM:** Oh, I know, he went in in '57, got out for awhile in—oh, he didn't get out at all? '60, because he had three [inaudible] . Then he went in and shipped over for six years, and then he got out in '66.

[00:04:16] **SETH:** Right, right.

[00:04:21] **WILLIAM:** And you didn't have any connection at the time with Tyree at all? Very little?

[00:04:26] **SETH:** Oh, once in a while he would write, very little, until after '65. During '65 then, I did see him in '64. After '65, he would contact—he would write more than ever. Matter of fact, he was overseas, and he would write my wife [inaudible] He would [?contact me?] but I never had been on him to make—he came here '67, '66, '67.

[00:04:58] **WILLIAM:** So he got discharged from the Marine Corps in '66 and came back to Seattle in '66? Now let's take off from there, what occurred from that point on? Was he disillusioned with the Marines, disillusioned with the society at large, or what?

[00:05:21] **SETH:** Yes, I can remember some of the incidents we had. You see, he was in the office and I was out on the job most of the time, and he would do most of the hiring and was having trouble getting help. This

was one of the things that really upset him. I remember one day he came up to Elizabeth James House and said to me, “You know, there were three Black guys and two Black guys who came by the office and wanted to get a job.” We had been calling down to the union hall. We’d already gone to union management and they wouldn’t send us anybody out to work. So he was kind of upset about it, and he came up to the job and was talking about it. And of course, that Monday, I think—or either that Friday—we discussed it.

He and I both had called the union hall and I told them that if they didn’t have someone there Monday by noon, we were going to hire somebody off the street, and this is the only way that we got any action. I remember that cause he was getting pretty good, you couldn’t bluff him, and going through all this stuff. Plus he knew what had happened to my father, from my friends.

[00:06:50] **WILLIAM:** What did happen to your father?

[00:06:53] **SETH:** My father was killed by three teenage white boys.

[00:06:55] **WILLIAM:** By how many?

[00:06:56] **SETH:** Three.

[00:06:57] **WILLIAM:** Oh, he was killed in Texas?

[00:07:00] **SETH:** Yeah.

[00:07:00] **WILLIAM:** By three white boys?

[00:07:02] **SETH:** Three teenage white boys. [pauses] He didn’t tell you about that?

[00:07:13] **WILLIAM:** No. That was in probably nineteen what?

[00:07:22] **SETH:** 1918, September 25, and I was born in 1919, February the 25th.

[00:07:31] **WILLIAM:** You don’t look that old. I might’ve wrote 1920.

[00:07:35] **SETH:** [laughs] Thank you. That was 5 months to the date before I was born

[00:07:43] **WILLIAM:** Okay, what else happened with that union situation?

SETH: Well, we’d already joined the union. They would send us someone out. But then they started sending us scum of the fuck, you know, you couldn’t get good men, you got whatever was there. Then after that, Tyree starts his activity.

Central Contractors Association?

[00:08:10] **SETH:** Yeah. He and Ben McAdoo and Jim Takisaki and Michael Ross. There’s quite a few people, I don’t know—

[00:08:29] **WILLIAM:** I know all of them.

[00:08:30] **SETH:** I can’t remember those guys. That was when that thing got started. And once he got active in that, he didn’t have time for the [inaudible] . It was a decision he had to make, and he knew it, and I’m sure that

he doesn't regret it. I can't say I feel that same feeling for him, but I've always been of the [inaudible] . You know, there's a way you do it. But I think that he's happy with what he's doing.

[00:09:20] **WILLIAM:** Okay, when did the change in philosophy occur within Tyree himself?

[00:09:26] **SETH:** I think in '68, '67. It must've been in '67, last part of '67.

[00:09:37] **WILLIAM:** And early part of '68?

[00:09:40] **SETH:** Yeah.

[00:09:40] **WILLIAM:** And he began to take more of a—

[00:09:46] **SETH:** I think actually, he seemed to lose interest in anything except this. There's a job to be done, and the only way it's gonna be done is if I get out here and do my part. And that was too much for him to do, you have to do one or the other. He realized that. [Inaudible]

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

...decisions to make, if you want to do it, you have to be honest with yourself, make up your mind, and go ahead and do it.

[00:10:56] **WILLIAM:** Well, that's the problem I had. My father—

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

WILLIAM: So he came in with that [?joke?] .

[00:11:01] **SETH:** You remember that—this friend of mine was an electrical engineer, and the other fellow was an electronics technician, and we all were working together as electricians, and we couldn't get in the union. When you find an electrical engineer isn't smart enough to get in the union, then you know there's something wrong. So this is one of the things that I think caused Tyree very much to try to do something about what he had seen, even when he was little. He was only eleven years old when he remembered these things, and we used to discuss it. So I think putting that together and some of the other things we all had experienced, just a person gets so much until he has to do something about it, even if it is a sacrifice that you have to make for a lifetime.

[00:12:13] **WILLIAM:** Whatever types of—

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

[00:12:14] **SETH:** ...whatever he'd be thinking about, not really.

[00:12:20] **WILLIAM:** How about in regards to the Black apprentice, I mean, Black apprentices coming into the shop asking for jobs?

[00:12:28] **SETH:** Well, I mean, we never had an opportunity to even dream of them until it went through this court, and finally, we did get some. But this was basically the problem, it was kind of a token thing. Tyree could tell you more about that than I can because he kept up with it, and anytime anybody would come to the office looking for a job, I would always send them to Tyree because he had a group that he was working with in

different areas: ironworkers, plumbing, electricity, you name it. All of these are hard skills to get into because of the work that you're doing, getting the apprentices out.